

Re: Weird Network Connectivity Problem

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Windows/microsoft.public.windows.server.sbs/2008-11/msg01286.html>

- *From:* carl.sawyer@xxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* Wed, 12 Nov 2008 21:47:12 -0800 (PST)
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Hi Dave,

Thanks much for your reply and suggestions. Sorry it's taken me a while to reply, but here you go:

I would immediately replace the cable between the workstation and the wall, and also the one between the patch panel and the switch. At the same time, choose a different switch port than the one you've been using.

All have been done, long ago and many times since. In fact, since this first started happening we have replaced the switch.

make sure your NIC driver on the workstation is current, and run the NIC diagnostic app if one exists. If the app fails the diagnostic, or if the problem comes back after having replaced the cables and trying a different switch port, I'd replace the NIC.

Have changed the NIC twice. Have even switched NICs while the x199 is in limbo, booted up and it's still broke. I log in remote after hours and now it's working fine.

Based on your description of an issue that happens rarely, and that also seems to spontaneously fix itself, this is almost certainly hardware related. You don't have a setting that's changing itself every few months, then changing itself back.

It can't be hardware. When this happens x199 can ping anything on the local network EXCEPT the SBS server, the server can ping anything EXCEPT x199 and everything else can ping BOTH of them.

please resist the temptation to mess with settings that are working almost all of the time.

Too late. I've changed every piece of hardware except the workstation

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and the server. I've changed NICs, workstation IP, all the simple "settings". What I haven't done is remove the computer account in the domain or start playing around in AD to see what happens. I didn't think I'd get a solid diagnosis from my post but I'll take any clues I can get and apply them prudently.

Lemme summarize – Fred logs in to x199, some time later x199–to–server–to–x199 goes into limbo. Maybe this happens once in three months, maybe it happens four or five times in one day and not again for a month and a half. Whenever it happens it eventually "heals". I've never seen a pattern until last week when it came back at the same instant that fred was being added to the local administrators group on another machine, the INSTANT that "Check Name" was clicked. This reminded me of another time when the problem disappeared when fred logged in on another machine. Pattern? Maybe the other times something else happened with the fred account that was not noticed. Or maybe it's just an amazing coincidence. BYW, I have no idea whatsoever as to what may be causing the problem in the first place. My uneducated guess is "AD weirdness" but that's not a very specific diagnosis. It's like blaming it on bad karma or the evil eye (I'll consider any possibility!).

And here's the bitch – I can't make it break so I can't pick a time to fix it. It breaks when fred is busy (always) and I'm at the other end of a remote login. And then it heals while I'm pinging and doing nslookups and comparing arp info. So I'm just tossing a net out to see if I can catch any ideas. I've been doing networks since the Datapoint days of the late 70's and I've been doing PC networks since LANMAN and Novell 2.something but my deep expertise is Unix (I helped develop the first TCP/IP course taught by good ol' SCO and so forth) and this has got me (and every person I've described it to) completely turned around. The hardware is right. The switch is right. The IPs and the netmasks and the DNS settings are right. Every other machine in the place is fine. It's GOT to be something confusing AD. Maybe. I mean, I can purge the arp table on the server, ping x199 by IP and it times out yet the arp table is updated correctly. WTF?

Sorry for going on. To tell the truth, I can't WAIT to figure this one out because, no matter what the cause, I'm gonna learn something before this is done. One of the best networking dinks I've ever known told me he was glad this wasn't HIS customer!

OK, I'll shut up. Thanks again for your suggestions but I'll see you and raise you. Any other ideas?

C

On Nov 7, 11:15 am, "Dave Nickason [SBS MVP]"
<gwdib...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

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Based on your description of an issue that happens rarely, and that also seems to spontaneously fix itself, this is almost certainly hardware related. You don't have a setting that's changing itself every few months, then changing itself back. There's obviously no guarantee that replacing the cable and the NIC will fix this, but it seems like doing so would cover almost all of the bases at a low cost. In the absence of a solid diagnosis that leads you to the contrary, please resist the temptation to mess with settings that are working almost all of the time.

<carl.saw...@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message

news:6bb922b2-b825-4076-bcdd-7ad85f961083@xx

I have a very weird problem that I have been fighting for many, many months and I'm looking for any hint, any idea, any possible lead. Here's the situation.

İ Small network – Windows SBS 2003 server and 15–18 client PCs, all XP. We also have a Terminal Services server and a Unix box. All workstations have static IPs.

İ One machine, \\x199, has an odd and intermittent problem. Every few months it will spontaneously and seemingly randomly drop off the network. It also will randomly reconnect. This may happen for three or four days in a row and then not happen again for two or three months. It just happened a few minutes ago and I'll use this incident to illustrate:

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1. User "fred" is working away, connected to Outlook, using shares and apps on the server, no problems.

2. Suddenly Outlook says it cannot connect. Shared drives are unavailable. Shortcuts to server apps are dead.

3. I log into the SBS server (remote).
ping x199 returns "request timed out".
ping 192.168.1.110 returns "request timed out"

When this has happened before I have tried:
ping -a 192.168.1.110 resolves the hostname but returns "request timed out"
nslookup x199 resolves correctly
arp -a returns correct information

...and from the workstation a ping to the server times out but the workstation can ping any other machine in the place, it can see the gateway, and it can browse the Internet except that the SBS server also provides DNS. If we give it another DNS server or browse to an IP it works fine.

4. I log into our Unix box and ping 192.168.1.110 and it replies w/no problems.

5. I log into the Terminal Services server and I can ping the workstation by name or IP and I can even log into it using Remote Desktop.

6. While this is going on someone on site is setting up another machine (\\x116) for fred to work on. Part of this process is to make fred's domain

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account a member of the local Administrators group. At the instant that they clicked on "Check Name" on \\x116 fred's Outlook client on \\x199 connected to the server and my ping -t from the SBS server began responding. Really.

Once before the workstation was experiencing this problem and fred logged on to the machine at the next desk and at the same moment \\x199 started responding; we thought it was coincidence.

In this case \\x199 dropped off while in use. In other cases the user tries to log in at the beginning of the day and discovers that the machine is offline.

One of the frustrating aspects of this problem is that it won't stay broke! I might be in the middle of testing and suddenly it just starts working. Before I discovered that the connectivity issue was only with the SBS server we have been through all the usual stuff to diagnose this problem: different cable, different NIC, change ports on the switch, etc. To me the confounding issue is that the problem is only between the SBS server and this single workstation. It would take hours for me to go back through my old notes and develop a comprehensive list of everything we've done but if I recall correctly the problem is not just related to fred's account. When diagnosing this problem we have logged on to \\x199 as administrator while it was offline and it made no difference.

I have considered stuff like reloading the machine, removing the computer account in the domain and recreating it, or driving a wooden stake through

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the machine and burying it at a crossroads but I would prefer to have some idea as to what's wrong before I spend time just shooting in the dark. Any ideas? Suggestions? Incantations or exorcism ceremonies I can try???

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